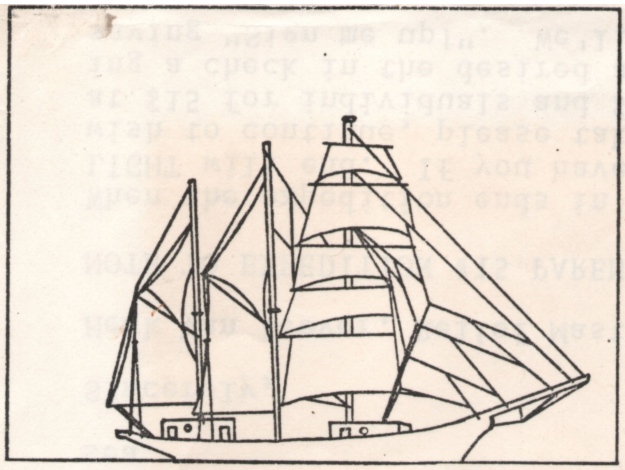

SEARCHLIGHT

Ship to Shore News from RV REGINA MARIS

Volume #4, Number 18 45° North, 126° West

The following contribution to this week's SEARCHLIGHT is made by Trina Wellman, Deckhand, from Bangor, Maine:

As we motor through gentle swells, along the coast of Washington, the sun rising to starboard, the moon setting to port, REGINA finds herself en-route to an area known as "The Prairies", located 40 miles West of Cape Padres. Here, we hope to find a congregation of humpbacks and, weather permitting, collect some environmental data, do some photo-identification, and some acoustic recording.

We left San Luis Obispo at approximately 1430 3 July, having had a chance to dry out, repair a broken bilge pump, bend on new sails, and, more importantly, take on a new crew member, whale researcher, Rick Osborne, to replace the injured Dan McSweeney. The high winds of the previous week had diminished considerably, enabling us to return to a direct northerly course. The weather for the next few days was calm, with intermittent banks of dense fog, just like "down East". The plaintive moan of our foghorn was heard throughout a quiet night of strained eyes and ears. It never ceases to thrill me the way the weather can change so abruptly from one extreme to another and how with it the ocean scenery takes on a whole new identity. On 7 July a strong wind began to blow out of the southeast clearing away the fog and brightening the sky. The whole crew came alive as we shut down the main engine and lay aloft to loose the full compliment of sails. We scudded off downwind with 8-foot following seas, managing to cover more than 300 miles in two days.

Although whale sightings have not been a high point thus far, we have seen a few individual humpbacks, a group of Grampus griseus , and a number of Dall's porpoise. However, to the delight of the many ornithologists on board, sea birds have been quite prevalent: sheerwaters, the large and awkward albatross, petrels, and, of course, the familiar, clown-like puffins.

Life on a square-rigger can indeed be trying at times, but holidays and reasons to kick up the heels are rarely forgotten. To be sure, the 4th of July was celebrated in only such a way as REGINA's crew could. After a find turkey dinner made by Chief Gourmet cook, John Anderson, only the watermelon lacking, we all lined the rail and watched the fireworks displayed on the shore. Not thoroughly impressed in the least, we decided to put on our own show. John Harrer, First Mate, donated his Darth Vader punching bag to be set adrift in a blaze of glory - a wreath of sparklers and Roman candles taped to Darth's head!

Sincerely,

Trina Wellman

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Now we are only 750 miles away from our final destination - Juneau. After having had some wonderful days of sailing under full sail, with the wind just where REGINA likes it - off her quarter - at times 8-9 knots as she surfed down the big seas - we arrived this morning in the area called "The Prairie". Although whale sightings have been sparce, we plan to transect this area for the next 24 hours, zigzagging our way across and working our way north. Seas are flat and the visibility is over 12 miles. Hopefully, we will find some humpbacks which seen to congregate in this area. The local fishermen also know how to use the whales to locate large schools of herring and salmon just as the Mexican tuna fishermen use schools of porpoise to locate tuna down in the Baja. Next week we should be working our way up the inner passage of Southeast Alaska - a change, a definite change - from rolling ocean and the pitching deck in the open sea.

Sincerely,

Henk Van Beever, Relief Master

NOTE TO EXPEDITION #15 PARENTS:

When the expedition ends in Juneau in three weeks, your receipt of SEARCHLIGHT will end. If you have enjoyed keeping up with REGINA's doings and wish to continue, please take action now to join ORES. Memberships begin at $15 for individuals and $25 for families and can be had simply by sending a check in the desired amount to our home port in Boston with a note saying "Sign me up!". We'll do the rest.